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10 February 1976

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comments on NSSM 232 - US Policy Towards
Svalbard (Spitsbergen)

1. NSSM 232 examines US and Norwegian interests in the Svalbard Archipelago and its continental shelf in light of increasing Soviet activities in the area and recent findings that oil deposits there may be significant.

2. The key element of the problem is the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920, which confirms Norway's sovereignty but grants 41 other countries, the US and USSR among them, rights to equal economic exploitation. The USSR is the only signatory other than Norway to have undertaken any economic activity on the islands, strategically located off major Soviet military installations on the Kola Peninsula. Recent signs that the USSR intends to broaden its activities, plus a seemingly intentional flouting of Norwegian regulations that implicitly challenges Oslo's sovereignty, has strengthened Norway's resolve to exercise its authority. On the continental shelf aspect, Norway maintains that the Treaty does not pertain, and that it has full and exclusive sovereignty to off-shore mineral deposits. The US and other Western signatories of the Treaty, however, have reserved their rights should it someday be determined that the Treaty applies to the shelf.

3. The bulk of the NSSM is devoted to establishing the political, economic, military, and scientific background against which US policy would be formed. Various CIA components participated in the production of these sections: OCI drafted a section on Norwegian sovereignty and interests in Svalbard and OGCR submitted a section on Norway's position on the continental shelf. The final version incorporates their

NSC review(s) completed.

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ideas, if not their exact language. In addition, after submissions from other agencies were found to be inadequate, OER and OSR made extensive inputs, respectively, on the issues of petroleum reserves on the shelf and the Soviet military inventory on the Kola Peninsula.

4. The NSSM sets forth six objectives for US policy toward Svalbard:

- a. maintain East-West stability in the area;
- b. resist expansion of Soviet influence;
- c. preserve the demilitarized status of the archipelago;
- d. retain freedom of passage for naval forces;
- e. secure US access to minerals on the shelf;
- f. maintain Norway's commitment to NATO and friendship with the US.

5. With these as background, and with an essential resolve to support Norwegian sovereignty, the NSSM examines the pros and cons of four policy options for Svalbard itself and for the shelf. Concerning Svalbard, the US could:

1. seek affirmation of Norwegian sovereignty by renouncing the 1920 treaty and encouraging others to do so;
2. let Norway handle its problems without US intervention;
3. provide Norway with US political support;
4. actively promote US presence on Svalbard and provide aggressive support for Norway.

US options for the Svalbard shelf are:

1. accept Norway's contention that the Treaty does not extend to the shelf;

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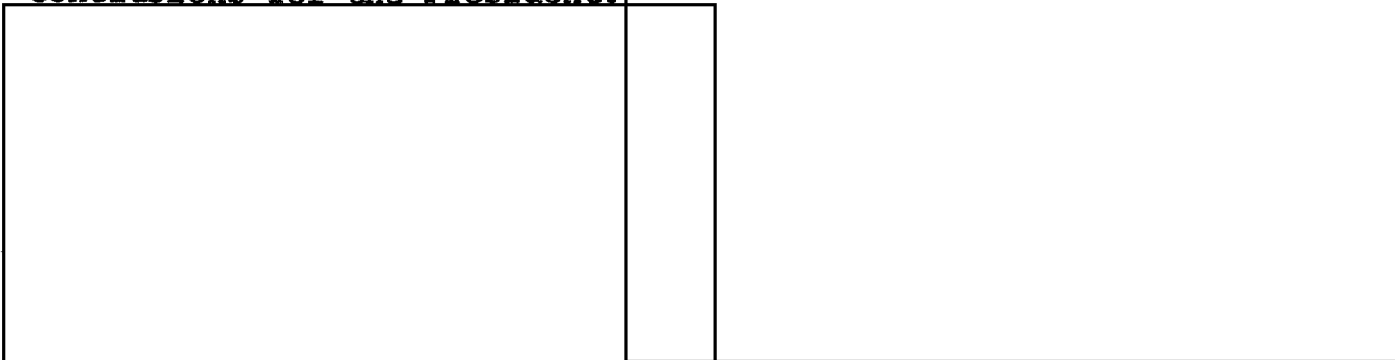
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2. reaffirm the US reservation, retaining US rights until more is known about the area's economic potential;
3. maintain the US reservation, but press Norway to agree to foreign exploration and exploitation;
4. insist that the Treaty covers the shelf.

The NSSM recommends the adoption of Option Three on both the Svalbard and the shelf issues. It also recommends adopting part of Option Four to the extent of promoting American scientific activities in the Archipelago.

6. An inter-agency working group has also approved a draft Action Memorandum which will summarize the NSSM and its conclusions for the President.

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7. The CIA offices participating in this NSSM agree with the definitions of the options and with the recommendations. There is no intelligence suggesting that adoption of these options would adversely affect the US, undermine its interests, or alter Norway's pro-Western orientation.

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